

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 0107

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EAGR, HO

SUBJECT: PUBLIC AND PRESS REACTION TO NEW GOH AGRARIAN REFORM
LAW 170

BEGIN SUMMARY: LAW 170, LEY DE REFORMA AGRARIA PUBLISHED BY
PRESS JANUARY 6 AND JANUARY 7 (OFFICIAL COPIES NOT AVAIL-
ABLE). LAW TO BECOME EFFECTIVE JANUARY 14 WHEN PUBLISHED
IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE. SUMMARY OF LAW UNDER PREPARATION. END SUMMARY:

1. GIVEN THE EMOTIONALISM INVOLVED IN FORMER DISCUSSIONS
OF AGRARIAN REFORM PROPOSALS, THE PUBLIC REACTION TO THE
RECENTLY RELEASED LAW SEEMS REMARKABLY MUTED. NEWSPAPER
REPORTERS ASKING FOR COMMENTS HAVE BEEN TOLD IN MOST
CASES EITHER THAT OPINIONS WILL BE FORTHCOMING FOLLOWING
DETAILED STUDY OR THAT THE LAW SEEMS TO BE ACCEPTABLE BUT
THAT ALL DEPENDS ON THE YET UNWRITTEN IMPLEMENTING REGU-
LATIONS AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THE REGULATIONS ARE ENFORCED.

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2. IN ITS EDITORIAL COMMENT THE CONSERVATIVE SAN PEDRO

SULA NEWSPAPER LA PRENSA COMMENTED THAT DEMOGOGUES ON THE LEFT WOULD NOT BE CONTENT WITH THE NEW LAW SINE IT CONSTITUTED REFORM RATHER THAN REVOLUTION. THIS ATTITUDE IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING IN VIEW OF LA PRESA'S EARLIER CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DRAFT LAW AS BEING RADICAL AND CONFISCATORY. TIEMPO MADE NO QUANTITATIVE JUDGMENT AND LIMITED ITSELF TO ENUMERATING SEVERAL OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NEW AND OLD LAWS.

3. MOST LABOR AND COMPESSINO ORGANIZATIONS HAVE EXPRESSED PLEASURE THAT THE LAW IS FINALLY WRITTEN BUT ARE DELAYING JUDGMENT UNTIL THE LAW CAN BE CAREFULLY STUDIED. ANACH (NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HONDURAN CAMPESINOS) AND UNC (NATIONAL CAMPESINO UNION) HAVE RESERVED COMMENT. ANACH HAS CALLED A SPECIAL ASSEMBLY TO EXAMINE THE LEGISLATION AND UNC WILL DEVOTE MUCH OF ITS JANUARY REGULAR CONGRESS TO THE LAW.

4. MEAT PACKING PLANTS, WHOSE PRESENT SYSTEM OF CATTLE BUYING REQUIRES EXTENSIVE LAND FOR PASTURES, HAVE ENTERED DISCUSSIONS AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL TO SEEK EXCEPTION FROM THE LAND HOLDING LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW. OTHER CATTLE INTERESTS EXAMINING LAW SEEKING LEGAL MODES OF RETAINING ECONOMICALLY VIABLE PARCELS OR SUBDIVIDING EXISTING HOLDINGS INTO SEPARATE CORPORATIONS.

5. LAW EXEMPTS LANDS DEVOTED TO BANANAS, PLATANOS, TOBACCO, COFFEE, SUGAR, PINEAPPLE, ICITRUS AND AFRICAN PALM FROM EXPROPRIATION AS LONG AS EXPLOITATION IS EFFICIENT. UNITED BRANDS AND STANDARD BRANDS' ACREAGE IN THESE PRODUCTS THUS EXEMPTED, BUT NOT THEIR OTHER LAND HOLDINGS. COMPANY VIEWS EXPECTED SHORTLY.

6. CORN AND COTTON PRODUCERS DISMAYED BY ACREAGE LIMITATIONS, BUT REACTIONS ONLY PARTIAL WHILE STUDY BEING MADE OF OPTIONS.

7. HONDURAN PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATION (COHEP) HAS LAW UNDER EXAMINATION. INITIAL EXPECTATION IS THAT THERE WILL BE SHIFT OF LAND UTILIZATION TO EXEMPTED CROPS, AND CONFIDENTIAL

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NO PRIVATE SECTOR NEW INVESTMENT IN OTHERS. DISINVESTMENT MAY OCCUR IN SOME CASES. COHEP BELIEVES CAPACITY OF GOH TO ADMINISTER LAW IS DUBIOUS. THE REPORT THAT ADMINISTRATING AGENCY (INSTITUTO NACIONAL AGRARIO) INA IS SENDING SEVEN STAFF PEOPLE FOR TRAINING IN PERU IS TAKEN AS OMEN OF FUTURE. FINALLY, COHEP LEADERSHIP SEES AGRARIAN REFORM LAW AS ADDITIONAL SIGNPOST OF THIS GOVERNMENT'S TREND TOWARDS STATISM AND ANOTHER NAIL IN

COFFIN OF PRIVATE SECTOR FUTURE IN HONDURAS.
SOWASH

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